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Message Text

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ACTION ACDA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 OIC-02 OMB-01 PA-01 PM-05
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 DODE-00 NSC-05
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7996
INFO USMISSION GENEVA
USLO PEKING
USMISSION USUN
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION NATO
USNMR SHAPE
USCINCEUR

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DEPT PASS TO MOSCOW IF DESIRED

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USIAEA

GENEVA ALSO FOR CCD DEL AND USSALTTWO

SHAPE AND CINCEUR FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: GDS

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TAGS: CCD, PARM, US, UR, FR
SUBJ: FRENCH DECLARATION ON DISARMAMENT

REFS: A. PARIS 24649 NOTAL. B. PARIS 24511 NOTAL.

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: FRENCH DISARMAMENT DECLARATION, REPORTED IN REFTEL A, IS ONE STEP IN WHAT APPEARS TO BE GOF EFFORT TO ESTABLISH, FOR BOTH INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC AUDIENCES, CURRENT GOVERNMENT'S CREDENTIALS IN THIS FIELD. WHILE THIS PROCESS MAY LEAD TO EVENTUAL FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN CCD, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT THE TANGIBLE RESULTS. WE WILL NOT SEE THE END OF THIS GOF PROCESS UNTIL THE SPRING 1978 AT THE UN SPECIAL SESSION ON DISARMAMENT (SSOD). HOWEVER, INCREASED GOF ATTENTION TO ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT ISSUES ACCORDS WITH BROAD US AIMS. THUS, WE SHOULD LISTEN WITH A SYMPATHETIC EAR AS THE FRENCH PURSUE THIS EVOLUTION IN THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD ARMS CONTROL. END SUMMARY.

2. THE DISARMAMENT DECLARATION REPORTED IN REFTEL A WAS ANNOUNCED WITH SOME FANFARE AIMED AT THE DOMESTIC FRENCH AUDIENCE. A CLOSE READING OF THE TEXT INDICATES THAT THE DECLARATION STATES ONLY THE GOF INTENTION TO DO SOMETHING UNSPECIFIED IN THE ARMS CONTROL AREA. THE TEXT OPENS WITH A DESCRIPTION OF THE INSUFFICIENCY
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OF ARMS CONTROL EFFORTS TO DATE AS A JUSTIFICATION FOR PREVIOUS FRENCH NON-PARTICIPATION. THE TEXT THEN LAYS OUT SOME GENERAL CRITERIA:

(A) THAT THE GREAT POWERS--THOSE WITH THE BIGGEST ARSENALS--SHOULD SET THE EXAMPLE;

(B) THAT ARMS CONTROL MEASURES SHOULD BE NON-DISCRIMINATORY;

(C) THAT THEY SHOULD BE EFFECTIVELY VERIFIED.

THE TEXT CONTINUES WITH AN ACCOUNT OF GISCARD'S ATTACHMENT TO ARMS LIMITATIONS AND ANNOUNCES THAT IN THE NEAR FUTURE A "PERSONALITY WITH INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE" WILL BE NAMED TO COORDINATE GOF EFFORTS.

COMMENT: WITH REGARD TO THE "PERSONALITY," WE UNDERSTAND THAT KOSCIUSKO-MORIZET, OUTGOING FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON, WAS UNABLE TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH PRESIDENT GISCARD ON THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THE FORMER WOULD WORK. GOF IS NOW SEARCHING FOR A NEW "PERSONALITY." END COMMENT.

3. WE HAVE NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO ESTABLISH THE PRECISE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS WHICH LED GISCARD TO APPROVE THE RELEASE OF THE AUGUST 24 DISARMAMENT DECLARATION.

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OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH FRENCH OFFICIALS TO DATE INDICATE THAT A NUMBER OF CONSIDERATIONS LED TO THIS COURSE OF ACTION.

4. WE HAVE DETECTED IN RECENT WEEKS INCREASING FRENCH CONCERN FOR THEIR STRATEGIC SITUATION. THERE APPEARS

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AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
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TO BE SOME APPREHENSION IN THE GOF THAT ONGOING ARMS CONTROL DISCUSSIONS IN WHICH THEY DO NOT PARTICIPATE
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MAY BOX IN FRENCH FREEDOM OF ACTION. FRENCH RESERVATIONS ON MBFR ARE NOT NEW. HOWEVER, THEY SEEM TO HAVE BEEN GIVEN NEW RECOGNITION IN OUR RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH FRENCH CONTACTS. IN ADDITION, THE FRENCH FEAR THAT SALT TWO MAY LEAD TO CONSTRAINTS ON THEIR ACCESS TO NEW WEAPONS SYSTEMS SUCH AS THE CRUISE MISSILE. THEY FEAR OTHER AREAS OF DISCUSSION (E.G., INDIAN OCEAN, CTB) COULD ALSO INHIBIT FRENCH FREEDOM OF ACTION. ALTHOUGH THE GOF IS APPRECIATIVE OF CLOSE US CONSULTATIONS IN RECENT MONTHS ON ARMS CONTROL ISSUES, THE GOF MAY BELIEVE THAT A MORE ACTIVE FRENCH ROLE COULD BE USED TO PROTECT FRENCH OPTIONS.

5. THE SOVIETS HAVE ROUTINELY PRESSURED THE GOF TO UNDERTAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN ARMS CONTROL DISCUSSIONS AT EACH HIGH-LEVEL MEETING. WHILE THE FRENCH HAVE ADMIRABLY RESISTED UNSOUND COMMITMENTS TO THE SOVIETS, THE FRENCH MAY HAVE REACHED THE DECISION THAT THERE IS NEVERTHELESS ROOM FOR SOME GENUINE PROGRESS IN THIS FIELD.

6. DOMESTIC POLITICS ARE HAVING AN EFFECT ON THE FRENCH EVOLUTION VIS-A-VIS ARMS CONTROL. TRADITIONALLY, THE PARTIES OF THE LEFT HAVE ESPOUSED ARMS CONTROL INITIATIVES AS PART OF THEIR ELECTORAL PLATFORMS. GISCARD, FACING A DIFFICULT AND CRITICAL MARCH 1978 ELECTION, MAY BELIEVE THAT HE CAN GARNER SOME CREDIT WITH THE ELECTORATE BY SEIZING THE INITIATIVE IN THIS AREA.

7. IN RECENT CONVERSATIONS, WE HAVE SOUGHT TO DETERMINE JUST WHAT THE FRENCH ARE THINKING ABOUT IN TERMS OF SPECIFICS FOR AN ARMS CONTROL INITIATIVE. IT
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SEEMS CLEAR THAT INTERAGENCY STUDIES ARE NOW UNDER WAY AND THAT THESE WILL TAKE SOME MONTHS TO COMPLETE. CERTAINLY THE FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER WILL SAY MORE ABOUT ARMS CONTROL DURING THE FALL UNGA. WE DO NOT BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT HE WILL MAKE SPECIFIC PROPOSALS.

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8. WE DOUBT THAT PRIME MINISTER BARRE DURING HIS UPCOMING WASHINGTON VISIT WILL BE IN A POSITION TO ADDRESS SPECIFICS, SINCE THE FRENCH INTERAGENCY STUDIES ARE STILL INCOMPLETE. HOWEVER, IF BARRE DOES RAISE THE GOF'S INTENTION TO BECOME MORE ACTIVE IN THE ARMS CONTROL FIELD, WE SHOULD GIVE HIM A SYMPATHETIC HEARING AS GOF MOVEMENT IN THIS DIRECTION COINCIDES WITH OUR AIMS.

9. THE TARGET DATE GENERALLY CITED BY OUR FRENCH INTERLOCUTORS IS THE SSOD TO BE HELD IN MAY 1978. THIS MAY INDEED BE THE GENUINE TARGET. WE SUSPECT, HOWEVER, THAT GISCARD WILL WISH TO ANNOUNCE AT LEAST ONE SPECIFIC INITIATIVE PRIOR TO THE MARCH 1978 ELECTIONS. THE MOST LIKELY CANDIDATE AT THIS JUNCTURE WOULD BE A FRENCH ANNOUNCEMENT OF ITS INTENTION TO TAKE ITS SEAT AT THE CCD.

10. WITH REGARD TO THE CCD, FRENCH ASPIRATIONS--AT LEAST IN EMBRYONIC FORM--APPEAR TO ENVISAGE FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN A REINVIGORATED BODY IN WHICH FRANCE CAN PLAY A SERIOUS AND MEANINGFUL ROLE. WE DOUBT THAT FRENCH CONCERNS ARE FOCUSED ON THE CO-CHAIRMANSHIP ONLY BUT ARE AIMED AT SUBSTANCE AS WELL. WE BELIEVE THE GOF WOULD ACCEPT A ROTATING CHAIR.

11. WHEN THE ARMS CONTROL PROPOSAL--WHATEVER IT IS--IS ANNOUNCED, WE CAN BE CERTAIN THAT IT WILL BE MADE WITH MAXIMUM FANFARE SO AS TO ENHANCE GISCARD'S DOMESTIC POSITION AND FRANCE'S INTERNATIONAL STANDING.
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BY OFFERING THE GOF SYMPATHY AND ENCOURAGEMENT IN THE MONTHS AHEAD, WE MAY BE ABLE TO REINFORCE THE GOF'S INCLINATION AND CAUSE IT TO ACT IN A WAY SUPPORTIVE OF OUR OWN ARMS CONTROL AIMS.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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To: STATE USIAEA
Type: TE
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